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# The essence of Japanese Buddhism

Ryūsaku Tsunoda

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# THE ESSENCE OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM

BY

Riusaku Tsunoda

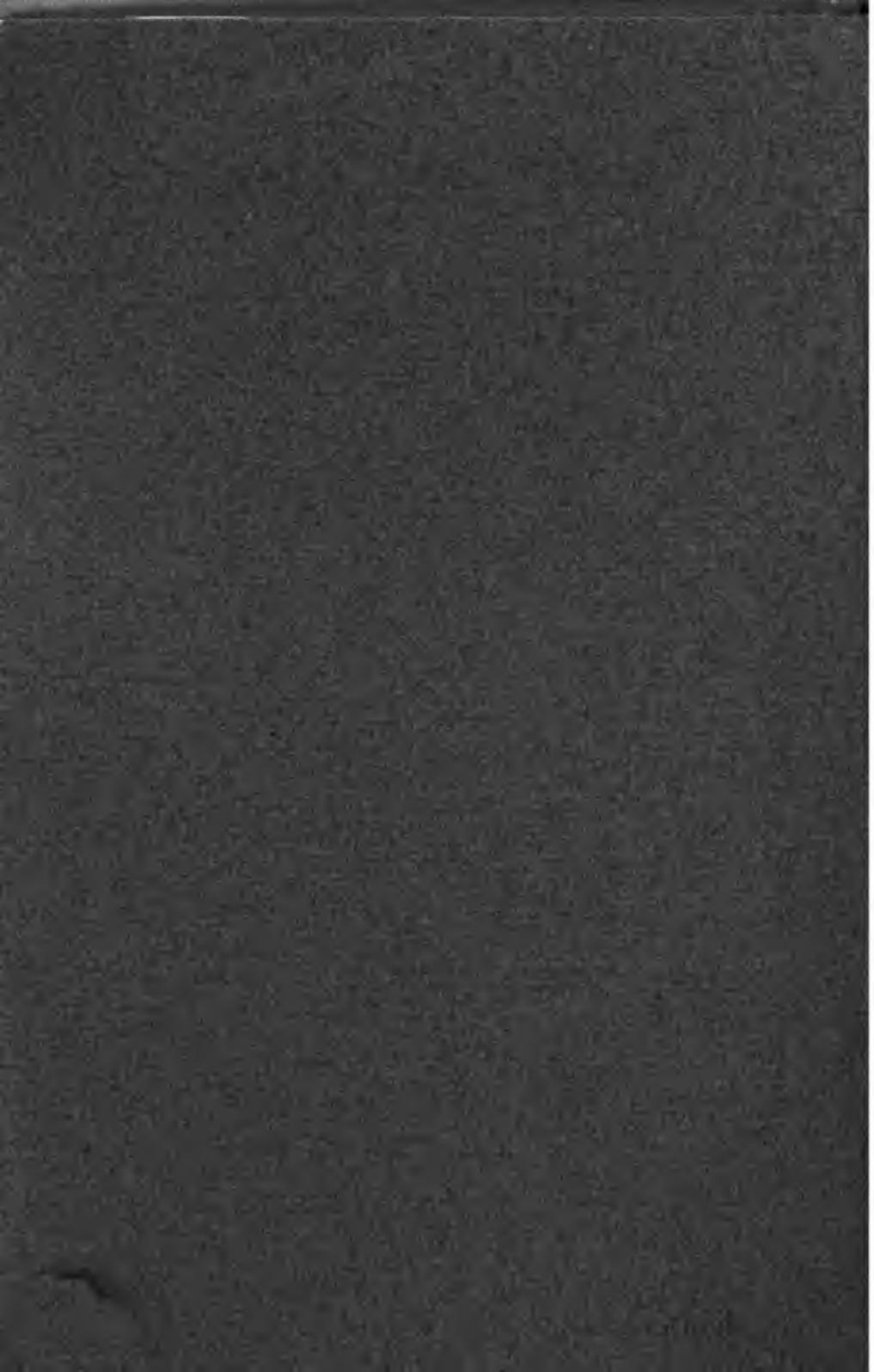
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

REV. YEMIO IMAMURA

Bishop of Hongwanji Mission in Hawaii



Honolulu, Hawaii  
THE ADVERTISING PRESS  
1914



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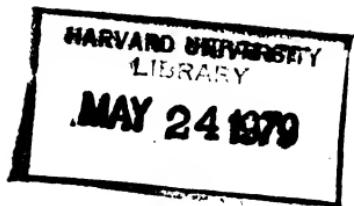
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To my dear  
Mr. & Mrs. Clark,



Frank  
J. Schinigr  
Honolulu, H.  
(P. 130x700)

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## INTRODUCTION.

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It is already seventeen years since the first church of our Mission was raised in this island, and in 1907 our Mission work here was co-operated under the name of Honpa Hongwanji Mission in Hawaii. It has now thirty-four Churches—ten in Oahu, six each in Maui and Kauai and twelve in Hawaii—together with twenty-nine institutions of primary school grade and three of the intermediate grade under its superintendence. Such rapid progress of our mission work is mainly due to the fact that our countrymen here—most of them—came over to Hawaii from that part of the country where our faith held its firm ground during many hundred years. Seed was already sown, and we have had only to foster it.

But what we have been teaching in our church and school is so little known, or, rather, to my great regret, has so often been grossly misrepresented to the public, that some of them often speak slightingly of our faith as if it were a form of superstitious idolatry, and of our educational work as a system of bigoted nationalism that lays a stumblingblock in the way of Americanizing our people. Nothing is so far from being the case. But ignorance is often an evil which results in mutual contempt and hatred. In order to avert such fatal results and turn them into right under-

standing and sympathetic appreciation, which are the root of mutual respect and love, I have long been thinking to publish the sketch of our creed and of our educational system in English, and asked Mr. Tsunoda to take up the task. And here is "The Essence of Japanese Buddhism" before you, which is soon to be followed by "The Essence of Shinraism" and others. As has rightly been pointed out, Japanese Buddhism is somewhat different from its Indian prototype or Chinese Buddhism, as Puritanism differs from primitive or medieval Christianity. Since its establishment and during its propagation, constant selection was going on through the length of more than a thousand years, and the best of Chinese and Japanese cultures were intermixed with it during its historical development. Thus Japanese Buddhism is not the teaching of Gantama pure and simple, but a mixture of three different types of civilization. And our Shinraism as it stands has, strange to say, many remarkable parallels with Christianity. In its conception of Buddha Amida, in its doctrine of human depravity and in its teaching of absolute dependence on Buddha's mercy, together with its morality of gratitude and thanksgiving, it sounds curious symphony with the teaching of the Son of Man, in striking contrast with that intellectual asceticism of Indian Buddhism. Here two extremes meet.

But it is reasonably to be expected that

there are many differences of conception between two religions. These differences, however, when they are rightly explained and rightly understood, will not only make no hindrance in the way of striking spiritual ally, but will help in bringing the further development of world culture. In the spiritual evolution, monotonous uniformity is often more to be deplored than reasonable variety. And it is with this hope that we present "The Essence of Japanese Buddhism" to the English-reading public. In the teaching of St. Shinran, the central idea is to induce all nations and all races on the earth, with no regard to their color and rank, to unite in the work of forming one large family, with our Buddha Amida as their universal parent. To bring the whole world into the sense of universal brotherhood or sonhood and live in unison the life of loving gratitude and unselfish endeavor is the aim of our teaching, to which all the enlightened people of the civilized countries, I expect, will give their hand and heart.

As to our educational work here, everything is conducted in this consciousness of universal sonhood, so there is no room for a petty spirit of narrow patriotism to seek a shelter therein. But in the day when the study of languages and histories of every civilized people are enforced in every part of every country, there must needs be no excuse if we give those Hawaiian born the lesson of an hour

every morning in their mother tongue and history. Our aim in doing that is not to bring them up as Japanese subjects, but as American citizens, more useful and more practical, as they can speak in the language of that country which stands on the other side of the Pacific as a friendly neighbor.

REV. YEMIO IMAMURA.  
Hongwanji Mission, Honolulu,  
January, 1914.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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Hawaii is often and well called the melting pot of the nations, but can we not expect that it will prove the same of the religions too? Socially and spiritually considered, almost every race and every culture of the world is represented here, as in an exhibition, and there is quite as much danger of misunderstanding and entanglement as the hope of right understanding and harmony. And it is needless to say that the prosperity of Hawaii depends much on taking the better alternative of the two. With this purpose in his mind, Rev. Y. Immura, Superintendent of the Hongwanji Mission, asked me a long time ago to sketch the essence of Japanese Buddhism in English, in order to inform the white circles of essential features of Buddha's teaching and bring them to the right understanding of it. True, in England, in Germany and in France the study of Buddhism has been taken up and is carried on in earnest, and in scholarly manner. But the Buddhism of these western scholars is the Buddhism which flourished once in the southern part of the peninsula, and must be distinguished from the Buddhism of Mercy or Redemption which held its spiritual sway in the north, and eventually travelled to China and Japan and established its permanent center in our country about seven hundred years ago, by the singleminded devotion and untiring ef-

forts of Sts. Honen and Shinran. It is this sect of Buddhism, this teaching of St. Shinran, that the Hongwanji Mission is propagating among its countrymen here. But concerning the feature of this Buddhism of Shinran, no information has been given to the white public up to now, except through the work of the late Prof. A. Lloyd, "Shinran and His Work." He approached the subject with the scholarly conviction that there existed historical contacts and connections of two world's religions, Buddhism and Christianity, in some part of China, and laid special stress on the parallel of two religions in their fundamental points of doctrine. I have no mind to raise objections to his conclusion, nor to make endorsement of it. At this stage of historical investigation it may be equally overhasty to make a statement for or against the identity of the spirit of both religions. To every unbiased student of the existing religions, however, there is little doubt that between the teaching of Jesus and Shinran there is more than one point of essential unity among so many superfluous differences. And in our country the enlightened class begins to entertain already the hope of amalgamating three religions—Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity—into one united body of social amelioration; and among Christian ministers there are a few who have gone so far as to call Christianity the Shinranism of the west, and Shinranism

as the Christianity of the east, and preach the gospel in the words of Gautama. Be it as it may, let us suffice here to stand erect and upright in our faith, and speak out our faith as it should be. The day of unity and harmony of every element of the different cultures, which we are so impatient to bring about, will come, as it must, only after the last say about one's own faith is spoken.

R. TSUNODA.

Honolulu, January, 1914.

## THE ESSENCE OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM.

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### THE FOUNDER OF BUDDHISM.

Plainly speaking, Buddhism is a religion founded by Buddha Gautama, who was born in the northern part of India about five hundred years before Christ. Unlike other founders of a world religion, and in marked contrast to Jesus, he came from one of the Royal family, his father being an independent prince of Kahilavatsu. So in his youth, aristocratic care and attention was lavished upon him unsparingly. His father asked noted Brahmin scholars to inculcate him in every branch of philosophy, to bring him up as a wise ruler. Even in the training of such military arts as fencing, archery and swordsmanship, special care was taken of him, so in his early teens there was none in the whole court who could surpass him both in learning and in exercises. At the age of nineteen he married a certain Yasodhara, and two years later he was the father of a lovely child. Meanwhile, the great problem of Life and Death found a dwelling in the depth of his mind; we cannot tell from whence. Tradition says he went out of the eastern gate one day in a chariot accompanied by beautiful attendants to seek diversion, and on the way he caught a painful sight of a sickly person begging and groaning;

and on another, while he was driving out of the western gate, he met an old man, weak and helpless, making his way by the help of a stick; and on the third, a funeral procession at the northern gate, just going in front of his coach; and the impression which these sad incidents made upon his mind can hardly be exaggerated. What is life? Life is a birth; life is a growth. But then sickness, and then decline of old age and decay, which is soon to be followed by inevitable death. And then nothingness. Simply defined, life is a sentence consisting of birth, growth, sickness, and decline as its phases, and death as its fullstop. The definition is plain enough, but the reflection is gloomy enough to make one feel sad and miserable. And our Prince Gautama was sad and miserable amidst the pomp and luxury of the court, of the fondling care of the fair attendants, and the loving sight of the beautiful princess and his son. How could he be free from this sadness of life? "Is there no way out of this miserable existence, which is always darkened by the forethought of that inevitable death? I pine for the life eternal, existence immutable." This question and pinning entirely possessed him with tenacity and persistence peculiar to him, peculiar to his type of religious genius.

#### THE LIGHT OF ASIA.

At the age of twenty-nine he went out by himself from the court in the secrecy of a thun-

dering night to seek the holy hermits among the rocks and mountains of Himalaya, where they lived in austerity and sanctity, like Christian monks in the desert, in order to have himself enlightened by their divine wisdom. Now in India at that time there were sixty-two sects and denominations of Brahminical religion extant, each with its peculiar rule of abstinence and sanctity, not unaccompanied by strange depths of religious insight, to which sacred books of the East bear full testimony. And there were many famous Brahmin hermits among the rocks and valleys whose wisdom and virtue was more than the solitude could keep in. So our Lord went to them immediately, and confided his disgust of the world, and disquietude therefrom, and fervently asked them to show him the right way to absolute freedom from the transient existence. They would have done so if they could, but they could not if they would. One can well imagine the deplorable condition in which he stood, with no spiritual help from without; he found to his dismay that there was none to rely upon in this work of enlightenment. Weary and tottering, he made his way to a solitude, and sat down under a linden tree to meditate upon the problems of Life and Death alone by himself. Temptations came in their manifold appearances one after the other, and only those who ever had the same experience can understand how keen and trying they were in solitary seclusion. But nothing could deviate him

from the right path ; he meditated the life problem on and on for three years without leaving the place where he first sat down, even for an instant.

April, 500 B. C., enlightenment came with the first beam of the rising sun, with which he was symbolically identified afterwards by his followers ; and the son of darkness suddenly turned out to be the light of all lights, and the stray sheep forlorn was at once the lion of humanity. And our tradition says our Lord leaving the linden behind him, took a mouthful of earth and ate it and found it very delicious, drank a handful of water and found it quite as delicious. Rocks, mountains, blooming flowers, chirp of birds, gaping of the spring, and everything that had seemed to him once as a pile of corpses, mockery of nature, looked celestially happy. The vale of tears, the abyss of woe, was now a paradise to him ; was Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Beaming with joy divine, he slowly made his way down the mountain slope to the land of Benares, where he was to preach his first Gospel. Pious artists spared no effort to paint our Lord at this time, and you will see in one of these masterpieces, our Buddha Gautama represented coming down from the mountain, thin and emaciated, his hair dishevelled and weather beaten, with tattered costume scarcely covering his limbs, but his eyes twinkling bright as an evening star under the celestial vault of his tranquil brow ; and he smiled those

calm smiles of love and tenderness. All the bitterness of spiritual struggle is combined and contrasted to the triumphant peace and joy of a conqueror. King of the spiritual in the mask of Beggary!

#### DEATH DIVINE.

The story of how and what he taught since then, which covers the space of more than forty years, was a story of untiring effort to enlighten the people, great and small, who flocked to him as children to their parents. He travelled from south to north, from east to west of that tropical peninsula, and some say that he even went as far as Ceylon. At that time Brahminism, though in the state of decline, yet held the spiritual sceptre of the land, so the mission of our Lord was not easy to convey at first. Opposition, threats and persecutions followed him everywhere, but with unfathomable forbearance and infinite goodwill to every evil doer, he brought them over to his side; all-embracing compassion and pity combined with that wondrous gift of persuasion melted stones as if snow. And at the end of his lifelong mission, he was really Jina, the conqueror; Cokravati, an universal monarch, in the spiritual sense, throughout the land of his birth. And in the year 420, at the age of eighty, he breathed his last in a hut under a spreading cocoanut tree, on the bank of a stream. Death so divinely calm and tranquil has no parallel in human record; to which the

nearest approach you will find in Phaedo at the philosophical resignation of the greatest of Greeks over the cup of the hemlock. The moon paled, the river sobbed; but one can hardly exaggerate the sense of loss on the part of the disciples who followed him to the last end and witnessed, to their grief and joy, the most sublime scene of humanity. Death thus sublimated, however, with transcendental acquiescence and celestial tranquillity, is no death in an ordinary sense. It is a symbol, a revelation which inspires men to the hope of perfect freedom and eternal life. And so it was, for the sense of the presence of Buddha was more real after his death than his lifetime, in a way, and his teachings proved to be the true light of India, China and Japan for a thousand years after his death, as Edwin Arnold so finely expressed in his much celebrated poem.

#### ESSENCE OF HIS TEACHING.

Now, Buddhism is the teaching of Buddha Gautama as such. But one may ask what is the essence of his teachings. He taught the right way of perfect freedom from Karma. To begin with, Karma is Indian, meaning one's doing — thinking, feeling, willing action all included. And as there is the fundamental law of cause and effect operating through the universe, one's doing is necessarily followed by its effects; life and death, growth and decay, pleasure and pain, love and hate, and

so on. Like begets the like, so the endless chains of life and death with its train of sorrow and grief, despair and disappointments. All comedies and tragedies of mankind are nothing but the work of this Karma. And you will see in "The World as a Will," by Shopenhauer, this principle of Karma is well worked out, before the western eye, as philosophical principle in the name of will to live, and Bergson's "Life Impulse" is but an optimistic interpretation of the same with the help of modern evolutionism. But if you want to know how this theory of Karma is akin to Darwinism, you have only to look into "Kokoro," or "Gleaning from Buddha Field," and other works by Lafcadio Hearn, who spent his later life in Japan like a Japanese. Being a poet and philosopher at the same time, his exposition in this field is unique and unsurpassed.

One's existence is a link of the endless chain of life and death, and this never-ending repetition of life and death is the Work of Karma, one's doings in this life and life before. So if you want to get rid of this bondage of Karma, you must go to the roots of one's doing and see whether you can do anything in the way of improving, purifying, idealizing them, and, if need be, can cut them away. Only by so doing can one enter into Nirvana, the state of perfect freedom and eternal tranquillity. Buddhist teachers never tire of enumerating its happiness, and I can add that those western scholars who take hold of the work

of Shopenhauer and Hartman will never fail in appreciating this idea of Nirvana, though it has been interpreted in many ways by different scholars. Even in some of Warger's *Nagres'* work, one can catch the faint echo of this oriental ideal, as some critic has pointed out, making a sweet undertone of celestial serenity. But let us not play rhetoricians, in enumerating those numerous adjectives and appositives prefixed and suffixed to Nirvana, and suffice it here to repeat that it is the state of perfect freedom and eternal tranquillity. Thus you will see, the teachings of Buddha Gautama are nothing other than that of the right way from Karma to Nirvana.

**'OUT OF KARMA INTO NIRVANA.'**

"Out of Karma into Nirvana" has been the motto of all Buddhists of all times. But how can this be effected? Being a plaything of Karma, as we are, how can we attain to this ideal of perfect freedom? The first thing you must know in this respect is that our Buddha Gautama was quite unlike those poor theologians, those logical choppers whose only aim is in sharp-cut definitions and skeleton-like formulae. His philosophical insight was profound, it is true, as profoundness could go. But he had the sensitive soul of a poet at the same time, as sensitive as a church bell, which sounds loud or low, according to the toss it is given. He talked like a peasant when he met a peasant, like a merchant when he met a mer-

chant. Like Shakespeare, he was myriad-minded, and in metaphors, similes and parables, Buddhist literature has no equal in the world. But with all his subtlety and plasticity of expression, he knew the limit of human speech in conveying one's thought. So he often ceased to speak when his disciples expected to hear much. And this silence was always golden to the intelligent. Some critic said that the unique impression produced by Wagner's music is rather due to that mystic stillness in the break of the melody, that tremendous silence after the stormy outburst. So it was with our Buddha Gautama. In religion, as in music, there is always something which speech can do nothing with but stop. This explains the difficulty of defining what our Buddha Gautama taught concerning the right way from Karma to Nirvana. And this very difficulty has given rise to the numerous sects and denominations, after his death, of which thirteen sects and sixty-two denominations are still extant in our country.

#### DEVELOPMENTS OF VARIOUS SECTS.

It will be too tedious to listen to the exposition of all these sects and denominations, with all their dialectics and casuistry. Some of these are just as scholastic as the medieval Christian theology of Thomas and Scotus. And the history of these sects and denominations covers the period of two thousand and five hundred years, extending from India to China and

our country. With change of geography and history, race and nationality, one can easily infer that Buddhism came to take on some new features unknown to the primitive Buddhism, so the descriptions of these sectarian developments will be a separate volume in itself. Interesting as it may be, it is far from being my immediate purpose. So putting all the discussions of this scholasticism and descriptions of sectarian history aside, I will try to give you a few essentials of Buddhistic conception concerning the great problem of life and death and of the right way of entering Nirvana as taught by our Buddha and understood by his disciples.

#### THE EXISTING BUDDHISM.

But let me note here that Buddhism as it exists in our country is the Buddhism understood by disciples no less than what was taught by the master himself. It is all the same with other religions. One may safely assert that Christianity is a teaching understood by Paul and Augustine, Luther and Wesley, as taught by Jesus. A genius, heaven-sent, may create a religion, but to complete it there must needs be incessant effort of numerous disciples, interpreting and adopting the teaching to the best of the consciousness of their own time. And the best or the fittest survive. All religions extant, surviving the vicissitudes of history, are, in a sense, collective or co-operative productions. It may be

vastly interesting to analyze this collective work and ascertain how much each of them contributed to its formation. But the interest therein is rather a scholarly one. And better for us to know, who seek in religion our guiding or saving principle of life, ~~is~~ the best of its essentials, no matter who has expounded this or that.

#### PROF. EUCKEN'S DIVISION OF RELIGIONS.

Broadly speaking, Buddhism as taught by the master and understood by disciples may be grouped under two heads, just in the same way as Prof. Eucken did in his "Truth of Religion." In the beginning of the second part he says that "Historical religions may be divided into two groups. These are either the religions of law, or the religions of redemption. To the first, the kernel of religion is the announcement and advocacy of a moral order which governs the world from on high. A fixed decree issuing out of a holy will is announced to a man for his acts, words and thoughts; a glorious reward awaits the fulfillment of this law, and a painful punishment awaits its transgression, if not in the world, yet in a world to come. Life thus in the whole of its extent is linked to a supersensuous world, is drawn to the daily task and to the decision for or against God. Such a call to man would be impossible without the conviction that his will suffices for the adoption of the good. On the other hand, the religions of redemption de-

clare such a conviction as false and superficial. The capacity of man which seems so self-evident to such a conviction becomes to the religions of redemption the most difficult of problems, becomes the most weighty question and concern. Through this growth of the problem man appears to the religion of redemption as entirely unable in his natural state to reach Heaven or God, and as a being who falls continually into evil and semblance, and consequently such religions long for an entire transformation and renewal—for a sinking of the old and a raising of the new, and for a great miracle of redemption. How such a miracle is to happen, may appear in the beginning entirely puzzling, because man views himself here in the most difficult entanglements. But the possibility of a deepening of life corresponds to the entanglement. Life is conceived more and more as a whole, and is stirred, convulsed, transformed incomparably more than hitherto. The very opening of such a question relegates the religion of law, despite all the merits of their greater simplicity, transparency, and rationality, to a lower level—to a level which has been reached and passed by the most important inward movement of the world." Thus outlining the two groups of religion, Prof. Eucken proceeded to distinguish two types of redemptive religions.

THE BUDDHISM OF LAW AND THE BUDDHISM  
OF REDEMPTION.

In making the division above quoted, there is little doubt that he had in view Judaism and Brahminism as the first kind of religions, and Buddhism and Christianity as the second. But Buddhism as it was, and is, comprises these two tendencies in itself. One of these has been known long in Buddhism as Jiriki, the teaching of working one's self into perfection; and the other as Tariki, that of depending upon others' mercy. This division of Buddhism into two groups under the name of Jiriki and Tariki, was first suggested by a Chinese scholar, but it was not until the appearance of a Japanese priest by the name of Genku, the founder of the Jodo sect, that the idea was clearly worked out. Since then this division of Buddhism into two groups was followed by the great majority of Japanese Buddhists. They spoke of the Buddhism of Law and the Buddhism of Redemption, just as Prof. Eucken made out in the work above referred to; and it is very interesting to note that the attitude of a modern thinker towards the religion is in the same line with that of a hermit priest who spent his life in a suburb temple of Kyoto, seven hundred years ago. Let us proceed to explain what is meant by Jiriki and Tariki, or the Buddhism of Law and of Redemption, somewhat in detail.

### THE BUDDHISM OF JIRIKI.

Surveyed from the historical point of view, Buddhism is rather to be identified with Buddhism of Law, as the Buddhists in India and in China mostly professed to teach Jiriki, but not Tariki, and there are eight sects and two score of denominations belonging to this group still extant in our country.

### THE BUDDHISM OF EMPHATIC NAY.

Now the essential feature of these sects and denominations is in the announcement of the opposition of Nirvana to Karma, of the spiritual existence of a spiritual man against natural existence of a natural man, and the conviction is that the natural man is able to achieve anyhow this spiritual existence by the energy of his own will, by the merit of his own work. Hence the Buddhists of these sects are so minute and particular in putting down the laws and regulations of thinking, speaking, and acting, which direct one's going into the right way so as to attain the state of perfect freedom. Each sect and denomination differs from others in enumerating them. But, broadly speaking, the Buddhism of Jiriki may be subdivided into two groups. These are either the Buddhism of negation or denials, or the Buddhism of affirmation, or in a simple manner, we may call one the Buddhism of Emphatic Nay and the other the Buddhism of Emphatic Yea. According to the Buddhism of Emphatic

Nay, any and everything in the natural existence of a natural man is imperfect, transient and doomed to death and annihilation, for, as we have seen elsewhere, this natural existence of ours is nothing other than the work of Karma ; and Karma is nothing but an accumulation of one's doings in this life and the life before ! But to tell the truth, thinking and speaking, and acting, all in all is, at the most, imperfect, capricious and often mischievous. Take every instance of your thought, speech or action, and if you are impassive enough, you will see it stained with a foulness of greed, envy and folly, triple brothers of our miserable existence. So it necessarily follows, according to the great law of cause and effect, the future, the life hereafter, and the next generation too is no better than the repetition of the foulness and wretchedness of ours. To the soul once awakened, it is needless to say that the prospect is more than one can bear ; and it is here the empathic say of absolute nay is most appealingly heard. Seen in the true light of wisdom, the natural existence of natural man has no worth for him to care to live. Everything there tends to inevitable decay and nothingness ; natural ties, conjugal relations, wealth, power and fame, what are they ? Like a rainbow, they may tempt you, enchant you for a while, or, like a dream, they may captivate you, enrapture you for an hour or so. But these things were there, and no more, and what remains here is the bitter pang of grief

for the fleeting luxuries of an irrevocable past. So you must denounce them all, must denounce all appetites and desires, greed, envy, and folly, everything; think everything void, and yourself nothingness; regulate your life and conduct with that end in view; practice fasting and live in chastity, and try to kill the two lifelong enemies, lust and hunger. Don't stay long at a place, for the love of home, sweet home, will come to you with it. Like cloud, like water, you must go on wandering all your life, and thus you will come to attach no worth on everything of temporal existence, and yourself. Then there will dawn in your mind the tranquil view of absolute void, utter annihilation and perfect peace; and with death serene, you can enter Nirvana and will thereafter be eternally at rest. So you will see in this Buddhism of Emphatic Nay, Karma, which is the cause and effect of this natural existence, is evil, imperfect; and Nirvana, the ideal, is the state of absolute nothingness, utterly devoid of anything like natural or humane; and the right and only way of entering into this spiritual kingdom of absolute emptiness lies in the emphatic abnegation, utter annihilation of Karma, or, in other words, absolute nay to the natural existence of natural man. Western critics have often denounced this negative trend in Buddhism as pessimistic, and some go so far as to declare that the teaching of nothingness is the teaching worth nothing. But those who have followed

the thoughts of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius with admiration, or those who have read the lives of Christian hermits in the desert with reverence, will never fail to appreciate the deep meaning of the Emphatic Nay, so vigorously proclaimed by the Indian sage. But the Buddhism of nothingness to be something cannot stop there, and we have quite a different kind of Buddhism in its train—the Buddhism of Emphatic Yea.

#### THE BUDDHISM OF EMPHATIC YEA.

In the Buddhism of Emphatic Yea, the announcement of the higher spiritual order and the conviction that one is able to attain to this height by one's own efforts, is just the same as that of Emphatic Nay. But instead of absolute annihilation, which the latter is so emphatic to urge, the former holds an optimistic view in regard to Karma, and dwells only on the necessity of purifying our activity, mental and physical. Not abnegation, but idealization is all it demands. For according to this sect of Buddhism, our Buddha Gautama, who achieved the spiritual existence of the spiritual man, was in his youth only a natural man in natural existence in all likelihood. He was born from the womb of woman just as we were, and spent his childhood and youth in the same way we did. But by his untiring efforts for purification and enlightenment, he entered into the blessed state of Nirvana, not after his death, but in his lifetime.

He showed therein that everybody is entitled to reach the same even in this life by thinking, speaking and acting just as he did in his lifetime. Nirvana is not far away on the other side of the river of life and death; is in life and death itself in this world. So make it your law of life that you shall think as Buddha did, and you shall speak as Buddha did, and you shall act as Buddha did, and you will be able to be one with Buddha himself, and participate like him in the happiness of Nirvana in your life. Everything in this temporal existence seems imperfect, it is true, and our life looks little better than a plaything of passion and lust. So if we don't care to improve ourselves, but remain as we are, our life will be nothing but a series of entanglements and perplexity, and inevitable death will be the end of the story, followed by a train of transmigration as the stern ordeal of Karma decrees it. But if you once make up your mind to live as our Lord Buddha lived, there is every possibility of our being one with Buddha, being freed from the bondage of Karma. In order to live as our Buddha lived, you must strictly observe the commandments, which our Lord has put down during his lifetime, in every particular, in the first place. And in the next place, you must take hold of the sutras and study them through and through. And in the third place, you must contemplate and introspect your mind. Strict observance of the commandments will make and keep you chaste and

holy, and your actions will gradually be like Buddha's. By reading the sutras from time to time, you will have no time to utter evil or unclean words, and in time you will be able to speak just as Buddha spoke. By the act of introspection, you can make and keep your mind calm and clean, which shall enable you by degrees to think as your Lord thought. Thoughts, words, and actions thus purified and sanctified, that bondage of Karma which subjects us to the endless transmigration of pain and suffering, is cut in its roots and will lose its power to prevent us from participating in that enjoyment of perfect freedom and tranquillity. Thus, being one with Buddha, everything in the world assumes an absolutely different aspect, quite unknown up to that time. For the world in which we live is no less subjective than ~~Objective~~, and takes on the color of our own mind. The moon may appear to one who weeps for the pang of bereavement, as a forlorn traveler in the Heaven, while to the other, who is overwhelmed with the happiness of attained love, it may seem as a wedding lantern lighting the couple to a bed of roses. So to those who are spiritually regenerated by virtue of a constant practice of commandments, reading sutras, and sitting in introspection, our wretched existence is not what it was. Everything has its place and its worth. "Even the mountain looks like Buddha, and the river speaks like Buddha."

## NIRVANA EVERYWHERE.

Nirvana, the Buddhistic kingdom of heaven, is not only near at hand, but is in us, above us, beneath us, about us, and everywhere with us. Existence of life and death is in itself nothing other than Nirvana! Even the temptation of passion and lust only serves to lead us to the enlightenment of Buddha. Thus in the teaching of Absoltue Yea, there is nothing to be rejected, abnegated or condemned. "Even in the lower animals, as dogs, you will find Bud-dhaship." "Welcome, all my friends," said Shakespeare, in "The Tempest," by the mouth of Prospero. It is just what Buddhism of this sect wants to say.

## TWO GROUPS COMPARED.

But let us stop here and think over again the shift of the teaching of the Buddhism of Law. Two types of them are not so different as at first appearance; rather, the latter may be taken as the logical consequence of the former; for the negation is in the last resort affirmation; and absolute pessimism often results in absolute optimism. As to the matter of historical facts, our Buddha started his religious career as atheist, and his early teaching always dwelt upon the importance of annihilating Karma, and his Gospel of tranquil Nirvana seemed at first sight to be transparent enjoyment of absolute emptiness. But the enlightenment of Buddha Gautama is not to be overlooked; with

it the avowed atheism of primitive Buddhism turned the scale to pantheism, and the teaching of Emphatic Nay was once for all the gospel of Emphatic Yea.

**VIEWED FROM THE PRACTICAL STANDPOINT.**

Observe the commandment Buddha laid down during his lifetime; read through and through the contents of sutras which contain the words of Buddha, *ipso facto*, and once at least each day sit down to introspect to the depth of your mind. By the virtue of these practices, your speech will be sanctified, your actions will be purified and your thoughts will be enlightened. And this sanctification of speech, purification of action, and enlightenment of mind, is all that is needed to be one with Buddha. This seems to be quite logical, and the so-called ethical culture will be nothing more or less than the admonition of purification, sanctification and enlightenment of our life in its three aspects, speech, action, and thoughts, in order to make one's personality perfect. But if you put these teachings into practice, you will find how hard or rather impossible it is for us weaklings to be purified and sanctified in these ways. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." All this is very good as words of encouragement, but the actual state

of human living always proves to the contrary. We ask for enlightenment of our minds, but often darker and thicker doubts are given to us instead. We seek the purification of our actions, and we are reminded all the more of our depraved nature. Knock at the gate of sanctity of speech; on its opening you will find therein only the foul and indecent words enshrined by our folly and ignorance. This sense of human insufficiency increases with the self-reflection of our daily practice. That we are too impotent to achieve heaven by our own efforts, is no theological thesis, but a sincere confession of humble minds. And the humbler, the more self-reflective the mind is, the deeper is the sense of this impotency. Weak as an infant, frail as a willow, helpless as an orphan, liable to be tempted, and devoted to the acts of sin and crime; these are the thoughts in this train. Hence the doctrine of human sin, or that of human depravity, in Christianity. And so it was in Buddhism, and the Buddhism of Redemption came to dominance at this juncture of religious thinking, slowly supplanting pantheistic optimism of the Buddhism of Law.

#### THE INDIAN TYPE OF REDEMPTIVE RELIGION.

Prof. Eucken, following the division of historical religion into two groups above quoted, proceeded to differentiate the two types, the Indian and the Christian, in the religions of Redemption. We will quote him at length,

for it may help the readers to understand our teaching better. He explained the former in this guise: "To the Indian religion, the existence of the world is primarily an evil; the world, with the whole of its natural constitution in space and time, appears as a kingdom of empty semblance. All in it is transient and unreal; nothing in it has duration; happiness and love are merely momentary; and men are as two pieces of wood on the face of an infinite ocean which pass by one another never to meet again. Fruitless agitation and painful deception have fallen upon him who mistakes such a transient semblance for a reality and hangs his heart upon it. Therefore it behooves man to free himself from such an unholy arena. This emancipation will take place when the semblance is seen through as semblance, and when the soul has gained an insight right into the foundation of things. Then the world loses its power over man; the whole kingdom of deception with its evanescent values goes to the bottom. All the excited affections caused by the world are extinguished, and life becomes a still and holy calm; it reaches the summit of a dreamless sleep, and enters, through its immersion into an eternal essence, beyond the shadows; it passes through its dissolution, into a state of entire unconsciousness according to definite system." And as the conclusion and criticism of it, Prof. Eucken says that "In all this, no new life with new values opens out in front of

us; the emancipation is supposed to consist in a right insight, and each individual has to decide for himself; the leader can only point out to the road; the energy to travel over such a road is a matter for the individual himself. A wisdom of world-denial, a calm composure of the nature, an entire serenity in the midst of the changing scenes of life, constitute the summit of life. When I know that my own body is not mine, and again, that both are mine and thine, then no pain can happen."

#### WESTERN SCHOLARS ON BUDDHISM.

Thus far quoted, the Indian religion of redemption is the religion of utter annihilation, laying special emphasis on the virtue of enlightenment, or right insight of the individual, and it is not quite strange that in the religion of this type, no new life with new values opens out in front of us; that the world-denial combined with self-denial will end in death-like serenity and empty calmness, as we stated elsewhere. For a religion to be in a true sense redemptive, there needs be something more to atone for the deception of this world, and make the kingdom of semblance with its evanescent value really worth living. But this something always escaped the eye of Western scholars in their earnest research of Indian religion, because, it might be, the documents and relics on which they carried their investigation were not only scanty, but most of the few belong to

that part of Buddhism which is known as "southern," where the tropical influence was at its worst; so the doctrine there developed lays special stress upon the evanescence and transitoriness of the world, and the asceticism and world-denial make their austerities stand in bold relief. But to conclude from this that Buddhism is a religion of negation after all, that it teaches that the unconscious calm of Nirvana is its summit, and the serene stillness of a dreamless sleep is its goal, is as one-sided as to call Jesus a theologian, because he proved the existence of the one God, or to make Buddha a philosopher, because he made speculation on the essence of the universe. As a matter of historical fact, Buddhism is vastly more than what those western scholars supposed it to be, and the close investigation of Buddhistic literature translated and commented on by Chinese and Japanese scholars, which is in itself a library, will bring the teaching of Gautama into quite a new light. It is especially the case with the Buddhism of Redemption. I will explain here somewhat at length the essential features of this type of teaching, as the Buddhism professed here in Hawaii by Japanese priests is no other than this Buddhism of Redemption or Tariki, that teaches the absolute dependence on the mercy of Buddha Amita or Amitabha for our salvation.

### THE BUDDHISM OF TARIKI.

In a way, the Buddhism of Redemption may be said to be a combination or synthesis of two kinds of Buddhism of Law in one; for, in its conception of human life, it goes a long way with the teaching of Emphatic Nay, but in the conception of Nirvana, the true, the good, the beautiful, imaginable are retained as in the teaching of that Buddhism of Emphatic Yea. Emphatic Nay and no less Emphatic Yea curiously brought together is what constitutes the feature of this new type of Buddhism. We will explain, first, what it conceives of our human life and nature.

#### ITS CONCEPTION OF LIFE ILLUSTRATED BY THE

#### EARLY LIFE OF ST. SHINRAN.

The early life of Saint Shinran, founder of this denomination in Japan, is quite an illustration of this in itself. Like Gautama, he too came of high family, known as the Hino branch of that powerful Fujihara family at the end of the Heian epoch, that covered the space of three hundred years from 782 to 1163. These three hundred years marked the most peaceful and prosperous period in our history, that luxurious pomp of the court life in Kyoto much elevated by the perfect accomplishment and fine scholarship of the aristocrats and refined to a great degree by the display of literary and artistic activity of palace ladies as its center. It was during this epoch that Mu-

urasakishikibu made her appearance and wrote our Canterbury Tales, known as Genji Monogatari. Seishonagon, our Sappho, and Ononokomachi, our Lucretius, were there too. In learning and culture, Sugawara Michizane was the greatest and has been worshipped until quite recent times by children as the patron hero of learning. Poetry and arts, too, had their representatives in the name of Kinotsurayuki, and Onono Tofu, the ideographer. So there is no wonder that our historian compares the period with Athens under Pericles or with England of Elizabethan era. But amidst or rather against all these stars of intellectual or artistic field, there hung in the spiritual horizon two big luminaries, in the persons of St. Saicho and St. Kukai, whose lustre as of the moon or the north star outshone all the others. Both of them studied all the literature, Chinese and Indian; travelled afar to China, as Greek philosophers did to Egypt, and mastered the alpha and omega of Buddhist philosophy, and established two of the most influential sects, one in the Mount of Hiei and the other in Koya. In accordance with the optimistic and realistic tendency of the age, their teaching was that of Emphatic Yea, which took all the ancient native cults of ancestor worship and nature religion into their pantheistic system of philosophy, glorifying their gods thereby in a new guise. Observance of the commandments, reading sutras and sitting for the sake of introspection, three holy practices of the

Buddhist, were much emphasized; purity in action, holiness in speech, absorption in the thought of Buddha, were proclaimed as essential conditions of one's being one with Buddha.

But this glorious epoch was well nigh at an end when our Shinran was born in Kyoto in the year 1173 A. D. The once powerful family of Fujiwara was losing its political preponderance, and the luxurious pomp of court life was fast fading, wailing before the onrush of the Heishi and Genji, the two powerful military clans of the day, at that time supposed to be only the savage, fierce and rude of the north. The earthquake and deluge of the country, as it was styled, and the general unrest in the upper classes thereby caused were most keenly felt by the sensitive mind of this child. The day of his family was setting, setting with celestial sadness in the rear and utter darkness in the face. Fading glory of the setting sun, they say, makes of the ignorant the poet; and this child of Hino had been studious and meditative from boyhood upward. Besides, he was an orphan at the age of ~~nine~~, <sup>four</sup> being bereaved of his father, and of his mother at eight, and was adopted by his uncle. "Even the savage become pious in the presence of death." "If there be no death there will be no religion." But how this grief of all human griefs, together with the oppressing sadness of threatening downfall of his family, made the mind of the child of nine at once pathetic

and religious, is well shown in the short poem he wrote as an answer to his relative who advised him to put off the day of his entering the monastery.

“Vain 'tis to count on tomorrow!  
The cherry tree will be bare of its glory at  
midnight,  
When winds with its sweeping blow.”

And on the very night when he confessed his resolution to his relative, he changed the silken costume of the aristocrat to the black cotton of priestly robe, and, having his hair shaven after the Buddhist fashion, he went out of his uncle's roof, not to return forever. At that time Mount Hiei, where Saint Saicho had established the first temple of the Tendai sect, was crowded with monks from all parts of the country, and its influence, both ecclesiastical and secular, was so great that it drew from the Emperor Shirakawa a plaintive sigh to the effect that the emperor could control the monks of Hiezan no more than he could restrain the turbulent waters of the Kamo river. It was the undisputed center of Buddhism of Emphatic Yea. So Shinran went up there, and studied sutras and commentations, held strictly to the ascetical habits, with the single-mindedness of the devout youth according to the austere rule of the monastery, for many years, and that optimistic doctrine of Emphatic Yea was mastered to a letter. But quite contrary to the exhortation of the doc-

trine, he utterly despaired of himself, because he found he was little improved, and quite as much degraded in speech, action and thought as when he had entered the monastery, or much more than at that time.

HUMAN IMPOTENCE AND MORAL BANK-  
RUPTCY.

Those ascetical regulations seemed to be all good at first sight, but when it was brought to the conscientious test, he found himself quite incapable to observe even one regulation out of the five hundred. "Thou shalt not kill any life," the first commandment says. But he was unable to keep his sight from the fact of human existence, that it could not get on even a day without taking life in some way or other. So wretched was the history, records of human life, in its essence—records of killing others, of war. "Thou shalt not tell a bit of untruth," another commandment says. But in truth, we as often exaggerate the facts as minimize them, and nothing true, nothing exact will come from our lips. "Thou shalt not meddle with any sexual affairs," another commandment says. But as the vision of fair Thais haunted the recluse of Paphunutins in the desert, so carnal desires pricked the monk in the mountain so cruelly that he could see nothing but the fair image between the lines of <sup>the</sup> ~~sutras~~ while he was reading it. Purification of speech, sanctification of thought and

holiness of action which were taught to be the true way of achieving Nirvana, thus seemed to the conscientious self-accusation of the young hermit, the bitter moral testimony that vindicates one's impotency of being one with Buddha in this life, and one's necessary damnation in the life hereafter. Moral and religious codes are all right inasmuch as they are within our capacity to realize. But if they are not, they will only serve to threaten us with a sense of human impotence and moral bankruptcy. This was the case with St. Shinran. "If there be no other way than this, I am doomed to the torture of hell," he concluded. Then he went into the library, and sought out sutras hitherto neglected in the dust, and earnestly sought whether there was any easier way of taking one to Nirvana. But to his dismay a hundred thousand volumes of sutras would not tell him anything new. Despairing and disappointed, he strayed out of the monastery to wander in spiritual darkness for many years. To speak, to think or to act were for him to commit crimes and breed sin, for he knew that he was incapable to speak, think and act as Buddha did; and by incessant committance of sin, he could expect nothing but damnation. The principle of Karma, with the stern law of causality, ordains it. Thus life itself was a burden, was a torture, was worse than nothing for him. That death and condemnation to hell were the end of weak and impotent human beings, was his possessed idea

at that time, and the agony of despair was most acute to the most conscientious.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

So you will see that the case of St. Shinran was more desperate than that of a natural man in his natural existence—a mode of life which was so bitterly denounced in the teachings of Emphatic Nay. For the natural man has a hope or possibility of achieving Nirvana, by annihilating all desires and passion, and living in strict accordance with the ascetical rules ordained by Buddha Gautama, though that Nirvana, the state of perfect freedom, is nothing more than deathlike calm and hollow serenity, with no throbbing of the heart with joy and bliss. But as for Shinran, the natural man in a natural existence was too impotent to achieve even this negative freedom; too unworthy in his speech, thoughts and action, to participate in the tranquillity of Nirvana. Surrender self, says the one; but Shinran says that we are too selfish to do so. Abnegate all passion and desires, for there is nothing worth striving for in this earthly life, the one teaches; but Shinran says, he would if he could, but could not though he would—passion so strongly dominates over human nature. Besides, for the one there is a hope of one who is going to try, but for Shinran, who had tried and failed, there remained nothing but the bitter sense of human frailty. The glory of the Fujiwara family was gone forever; his parents slept eternal sleep never to wake

again; he, too, is destined to the same fate. Nothing comes from his lips, out of his head and heart that can take him to the state of eternal bliss and joy. This was the conclusion he arrived at when he was twenty-nine years old. You may call it dark pessimism, or the Japanese version of the doctrine of human depravity. But for Shinran and his followers this impotent helplessness of the human being was what every religious soul could not help being conscious of as the result of disillusionment concerning our nature.

#### THE DIVINE HAND.

He strayed out of the monastery with a sheer sense of disappointment and despair. After the hard, austere life on the mountain for twenty years, he found human nature too weak and impotent, too full of passion and inclined to folly, to attain anything eternal. So if there were no other powers to come to his help, it was more than obvious that his doom in the coming life was sealed. So he went to the temples to ask the favors of Buddha. He bowed down before the image of Yakushi for a hundred days and nights. Then in the Temple of Kannon, fasting and praying for three months and ten days. None asked favor more fervently, none sought the revelation more piously, but, alas! the door was closed when he knocked, and no sign, no answer came from the divine altar upon which the image stood. Dejected and depressed, he was one day cross-

ing the bridge that went across the river Kamo, and on the way met his old friend of the monastery, who, perceiving at once his dejected condition and inward trouble, asked in pity the cause of it. Shinran could do nothing but confide his doubts and despair. Then his friend told him that in Yoshimizu, there lived St. Honen, who professed the teaching of Redemption of Buddha Amida; and the great and small, even women, who had been rejected as sinful beings, went flocking there to listen to his sermons, and came home radiant with promise and hope of salvation. "So you had better go to him at once," was the sincere advice. He could not do otherwise than comply with it, and straight he went on that very day to see St. Honen at Yoshimizu, and was allowed to his presence at once. In one of the secluded chambers of the temple, where the faint rustling of leaves and the quaint tune of the stream were the only noises that disturbed the transcendent stillness, they talked on and on till the dead of night. When Shinran was retracing his way under the pale light of the setting moon, tears were fast trickling down his emaciated cheeks. But in his tears there was a beam of gratitude hitherto unknown. He was now another man, because the unexpected mercy of Buddha Amida offered salvation through the lips of St. Honen.

## WHO WAS ST. HONEN.

St. Honen was often compared with St. Francis of Assisi, and sometimes has been called the Martin Luther of our country—and with reason. For we find in him the divine piety of a hermit combined with the ardent zeal of a reformer. With him, the secular authority of the previous Buddhism gave way, and the Buddhism of Redemption started in a new light, and with renewed influence, to be once again the religion of the people, and of the heart, instead of being a religion of the aristocrats, and of reason. He, too, was a son of tears from early boyhood, his father being killed in a night attack on his house by an enemy. In compliance with the will of his father, he left his material roof at the age of fourteen, to become a priest to get rid of the obligation of revenge, which was binding at that time, on the sons of Samurai on the one hand; and on the other, to achieve the bliss of Nirvana for the sake of the lost soul of his father. He studied Japanese and Chinese classics first as the preparatory course, and then the doctrine of Buddhist sects, numbering eight at his time. But to his regret, he soon found that there were no Buddhist scholars in Kyoto or Nara who could inculcate in him details of the doctrine. So he had to take to sutras and commentations by himself, and think it over in solitude. Lonely but determined, he kept on in his study with an orig-

inality and independence of spirit common to genius; and after more than twenty years' hard work, no wonder that he was looked up to as "No. 1 in wisdom," the foremost in the ranks of noted Buddhist scholars. Even the pretentious Tendai scholars of Hieizan were as a rat before a cat in his presence. And from Koya or from Nara, noted theologians flocked to him to learn the secret of their own doctrine. But he was uneasy in the depth of his soul, because he knew that the Law taught by Buddhism, with its glorification of man and nature, was an Alps which might have been crossed by a Napoleon, but was insurmountable by common folks, impotent ~~and~~ weak ~~as~~ as they were. He, too, was helpless, just like them; so he thought that if there were no easier way to lead them up to Nirvana, heaven knew what would become of them. So he again went into the library to seek a smoother and easier way in sutras. After lengthening years of toil and hard study, he found it in the book written by a Chinese saint by the name of Zendo. It was the teaching of salvation of the all-embracing Budda Amida. Let us state in the words of St. Shinran himself what this new Gospel is.

#### NEW GOSPEL.

1—2. I put my trust in the great Tathagata of Infinite Life and Boundless Light!

3—10. Hozo the Bodhisattva, in the days of his humiliation, being in the presence of the

Tathagata Sejizaio, examining the degree of excellence of the Paradises of all the Buddhas, the causes of their formation, and the angels and men in them, made his great Vow and proclaimed his mighty Oath, which he meditated and selected for the space of five long Kalpas; and he repeated the Vow of announcing his Holy Name "Amida" in all the Ten Quarters.

11—16. Universally doth he send forth his endless, boundless, all-pervading, unrivalled, supreme Light, his Light of Purity, of Joy, of Wisdom, His changeless, unconceivable, unexplainable Light, brighter than the brightness of Sun or Moon. His Light illuminates worlds more numerous than dust, and all sentient creatures enjoy it and are illuminated thereby.

17—20. His Holy Name which was revealed by his Vow of Salvation, is the fundamental Power that justly determines us to enter into his Pure Land. His Vow to make us put our sincere trust in it is the effective cause which produces perfect Enlightenment. His Vow to lead us without fail into Nirvana has been fulfilled; in consequence of it, we can acquire the same rank as the Bodhisattva in this life, and Nirvana in the next.

21—24. The reason why the Tathagata S'akyamuni was revealed to the world was solely that he might proclaim the Boundless Ocean of Amida's Fundamental Vow. Men, numerous as the Ocean Waves, who are sub-

ject to the Five Obstacles and entangled in Evil, should certainly listen to the Tathagata's true words.

25—28. If once there be aroused in us but one thought of joy and love (in consequence of the Vow), we turn just as we are with our sins and lusts upon us, towards Nirvana. Laymen and saints alike, even those who have committed the five deadly sins, and slandered the Holy Laws of Buddha, will yet, by faith in the power of the Tathagata, enter into the enjoyment and taste of his mercy, as surely as the water in the mountain stream ultimately reaches the Ocean and becomes salt.

29—35. The Light of the Divine Heart which has taken hold of us, illuminates and protects us continually, and dispells the darkness of Ignorance. It is true that the dark mist of covetousness and passion constantly overhangs the sky that is above the believing heart. Yet, though the sky above may be constantly overcast, beneath the cloud it is light; there is no darkness.

35—40. When we have made Faith our own, and have received a sight of the great mercy and a thought of pious joy, we pass away sideways from the five evil spheres of life. If any layman, whether good or bad, hears and believes the all-embracing Vow of Amida-Buddha, him will the Tathagata S'akyamuni praise for his wisdom, and will call him a lotus-flower among men.

41—48. For sentient creatures, who are heretical, evil, and proud, to believe and accept the practice of Amida's Fundamental Vow, is indeed a hard matter; there is nothing harder than this.

Abhinharma Doctors of Western India, noble priests of China and Japan, have declared to us that the true meaning of the Great Saint's (S'akyamuni's) appearance was to point to the true Vow of Amida, and the Vow is just the way for us.

50—54. S'akyamuni the Tathagata, on the mountain peak in Lanka (in Ceylon), prophesied for the people assembled to hear him that there should appear in South India, a great teacher, Nagarjuna by name, who should destroy the conflicting views of Entity and Non-Entity, who should clearly teach the excellent law, of the Mahayana, who should reach the Class of Joy and be born in Paradise.

55—60. He (Nagarjuna) taught that the way of Salvation by one's own efforts is like a toilsome journey by land, that the Way of Faith in the Merits of Another is as an easy voyage in a fair ship over smooth waters, that if a man put his trust in the Fundamental Vow of Amida, he will enter at once, by Buddha's power, into the class of those destined to be born in the Pure Land. Only let him ever call upon the Name of the Tathagata, and gratefully commemorate the great all-embracing Vow.

61—64. Vasubandhu, also, the Bodhi-

sattva, composed his praise of the Pure Land, put his whole trust and confidence in the Tathagata of Boundless Light, established the truth by the Sutras, and made clear the way of "cross-wise-going-out" through the merits of the great Fundamental Vow.

65—72. (Vasubandhu taught), with a view to the Salvation of Men through the Faith in Another's merits which Amida bestows upon us, the mystery of the One Heart. If a man enter into this Faith, he will acquire the merit of the Great Ocean of Divine Treasures, and will certainly be admitted to the Great Company of the Saints, in the present life. In the future life, he will go to the Pure Land which shines with the Light of Wisdom like the lotus, and having acquired the Holy Existence with divine power he will return to the forest of human passions, and there, in the garden of life and death (for the Salvation of his fellow creatures), will manifest himself in various transformations.

73—78. Take Donran our teacher, whom the king (Wuti) of the Lian Dynasty revered as a Bodhisattva. From Bodhiruci, the Master of the Tripitaka, he received the teaching of the Pure Land, and burning the ascetic books (in which he had hitherto put his trust), put his faith in the Paradise of Bliss. He followed the teachings of Vasubandhu (which he learned from Bodhiruci), and clearly taught that Amida's Great Vow was the effective cause of Birth in Paradise.

78—84. (Donran taught) that the Grace of new birth into Paradise, as well as that whereby we can return to Earth to aid our fellow-beings, is a gift which we receive through the Budha's power, and that the effective cause whereby we are justly determined to be born in the Pure Land, is only the believing heart. Wherefore, if we, blind and sinful persons, arouse this believing heart, we can perceive Nirvana in this life. Afterwards, without fail, we reach the Pure Land of Boundless Light, and teaching all sentient creatures that are involved in misery of Earth, lead them to salvation.

85—92. Doshaku taught that the innumerable practices for perfecting righteousness by one's own efforts are of no value, and the invocation of the Name which comprises all virtues, he praised as beneficial. He spoke much of the three marks of Non-Faith and Faith, and showed that in all three Ages it is the principle of Mercy that alone rules and draws men. Though a man had done evil all his life, yet, if he were once brought near to the Great Vow, he would reach the Land of Bliss and enjoy the fruits of Salvation.

93—94. Zendo was the first that understood the true will of Buddha S'akyamuni in his age, and that had pity, alike for those who practised meditation or moral good, as for those who lived in wickedness.

95—100. Zendo taught that the Effect of

Salvation is given by the Holy Light and the Sacred Name of Amida, and expounded the Great Ocean of Wisdom contained in the Fundamental Vow. The believer, having rightly received the adamantine heart of firm faith, and having answered to the calling of firm faith, and having answered to the calling of the Tathagata with a joyful heart, like Vaidehi receives the threefold assurance and immediately enters into the happiness of the Eternal Life.

101—102. Genshin studied all the teachings of S'akyamuni, and earnestly aspired to go to the Buddha's Land. He exhorted all men to go there too.

103—108. Genshin established a difference between a pure and an impure Faith, the one deep and the other shallow. Also, he taught that there are two forms of Paradise (Kwedo and Hodo) as places of rest for those of deep and shallow faith respectively. O deadly sinner! Invoke but once Amida-Buddha! He is taking hold of us. Though our eyes of flesh can not clearly see him owing to our sins, yet is his mercy constantly present to illuminate our minds.

109—112. My teacher Genku threw light on Buddhism, and had deep compassion for the laity, good or bad. It was he who originated the Shinshu teachings in this country, and propagated in this wicked world the doctrine of Amida's Selected Vow.

113—116. Genku taught that the reason why men keep constantly returning to the Home of Error (bodily life) is entirely due to our being fast bound with doubt. In order that we may enter straight into the peaceful and eternal abode of Nirvana, it is necessary for us to receive the believing heart.

117—120. Thus prophets and teachers, propagating the teachings of the Sutras, have saved countless men from countless evils. Monks and laymen in the present age! We must put our hearts together, and believe the words that these exalted monks have spoken.

#### BUDDHA AMIDA AS THE UNIVERSAL PARENT.

This religious song is known among the faithful as Shoshinge, or the hymn of the true faith, and the translation was rendered by the pen of the late Prof. A. Lloyd of Tokio Imperial University, who made the study of Japanese Buddhism his life work. His "Shinran and His Work," together with "The Religion of Half of Japan," is of scholarly merit, and is much appreciated among the unbiased students of religion. But in perusing this translation, you can easily perceive how different this Buddhism of Redemption is from that of the Law. For in this, Buddha Amida is the centre of worship, and our Buddha Gautama is considered only as a bearer of light, who proclaimed the gospel of salvation of Amida Buddha. In the conception of Buddhahood, too, the previous Buddhism laid emphasis on the enlightenment of the mind, sanctification of speech and

holiness of action, but in this the most dominant feature of Buddha ~~Amida~~ lies in Buddha's vow, in his mercy, in his all-embracing love and compassion. He thought out everything, wrought out everything, in order to save us human beings, impotent and helpless, wicked and wretched, and so otherwise doomed to the torture of hell. Buddha Amida knew well that we human beings are too impotent to achieve Nirvana by our own work. For all that, he loves us, pities us all the more, and made the vow to take all human beings up to Nirvana, the pure land, and his vow was fulfilled, as it witnessed in the Sutra of Budhabashi Amitayudhiana. So man and women, the great and the small, the learned and the ignorant, righteous and wicked, shall be saved by trusting his vow and depending absolutely on his mercy. There is no need, then, for these ascetic practices, reading Sutras, sitting in introspection, but a faith in his vow suffices. Depend absolutely, single-mindedly on the mercy of Buddha Amida, omnipotent and all-embracing compassion, and love of Buddha will not, cannot fail to take you up to the pure land, the land of eternal light and bliss.

Christians say that God loves us so much that He sent His only begotten Son. But Buddhists say that Amida Buddha loves us so much that he came out of Nirvana in person, in the guise of Hozobiku. The Bible says that Jesus atoned the sins of mankind by dying on the cross. But Sutra says Hozobiku made a

vow to save all human beings, and thought out all, wrought out all to that end. So the Bible promises that if one puts faith in Jesus Christ he will be saved by the merits of the crucified, however sinful and ignorant one may be. But our Sutra pledges that if one rely on the mercy of Buddha Amida, he will be saved by the virtue of his vow, sex and merit having no discrimination in his eye. One may prefer the brave to the coward as a friend, the learned to the ignorant as a brother; but as for parents, they could not love the one more than the other; or they may love the one more than the former, for they know that the latter are more in need of help than the former. "How think ye? If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be ~~gone~~ astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains and seek that which goes astray? And so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Amida Buddha stands out for us as the universal parent and stretches his merciful hands out to the wretched, to the wicked, to the poor, to the helpless as well as to the rich, to the righteous and to the wise, and takes us up to the land of bliss. Seek or seek not, he will find you out; ask or ask not, he will give to you; knock or knock not, he is always open to

you. So in the midst of perplexities, you may think you missed him, or in the height of intellectual pride, you may think you can get on without his help, but, all the same, he is watching you, as the mother watches her child, sleepless through the night—though insensible and ungrateful it may be—always ready to help, ease, and console it.

This is our Amida Buddha, and his salvation as it was proclaimed by Sakyamuni in the Sutra. So in the Redemption of Buddha Amida, nothing is required of us, as nothing is wanting in him. Rely on his vow, depend absolutely upon his mercy, and you will be taken up to the land of Bliss and Joy Eternal, even with no merit on your part worth mentioning. Such was the admonition of St. Honen, and Shinran was saved thereby.

#### VERIFICATION OF THE FAITH.

But it is very hard to put faith on the vow of Amida unless there be some historical documents to verify the vow of salvation, one may argue. You must prove the existence of Honozobiku and his vow, as Christian theology tries to do with God, another may demand. Believe after you verify, or your religion will be nothing but a superstition, a third may join in the attack. For those of a scientific turn of mind, such an argument would seem logical, such a demand reasonable, and such an attack quite serious. And the followers of the true sect have no logic to refute the demand of

science and history in advance; on the contrary, Buddhists are quite willing to accept the discovery of science at the first notice. The intellectual pride and pretentiousness of Christian bigots who assumed the treasure of all knowledge was under their keeping in the form of the Bible, and thereby ventured to recklessly persecute so many scientists, were quite unknown to them. But, as we said elsewhere, Shinran was sorely disappointed by his intellectual impotence, so disappointed that he called himself ignorant throughout his after life. "I cannot even tell good from evil," he often sighed. Before such greatness of humiliation, one cannot press him to prove the existence of Buddha Amida. In one of his talks, to his disciples, Shinran expressed his attitude in this respect in no evasive manner. "I think," he said to them, "all of you came afar to me, travelling across the border of more than ten provinces, exposing your life to danger, in the sole hope of being acquainted by me with the right way of rebirth in the pure land. But it is a gross error if you take me as a sage, who knows anything other than the salvation by faith about Buddhism. I say you had better go to Nara or Hieizan, where a number of splendid scholars are living, if you want any other doctrine, and I am sure they will enlighten you. As for me, I have nothing particular, absolutely nothing but to rely by faith on the vow of salvation of Buddha Amida. Faith may take me up to the pure

land, or may take me down to hell: I can tell nothing. Even should I be taken down to hell, by putting faith on the vow as was taught by St. Honen, I have no mind to accuse him. If I be worthy enough to be one with Buddha by the practice of any other way than faith and being taught to put faith in Buddha Amida, and am thereby taken down to the torture of hell, then the fault was his and I may well accuse him. But I know too well of my impotence to achieve anything worthy by my own efforts, and the lot of banishment to hell is my due. But if the vow of Buddha Amida be true, the sermon of Sakya can never be a lie. And if the sermon be not a lie, what Honen taught can not be untrue. If Honen be true, what I have taught you may well be relied upon. This is all I believe, ignorant as I am. So you think over it, each by himself, and settle whether or not you will abide on the mercy of Buddha Amida."

A spiritual orphan, forlorn and destitute, as he really was, he knew not what to do but to rely on the testimony of Honen and Sakamuni. Humbly resigned, but innocently confident, he looked up Gautama and Honen, together with the other six priests mentioned above in the Shoshinge, as his spiritual guide, and rested quite satisfied with their words of assurance—and with reason. For religion in the last resort is nothing but the verification of faith in the divine personality. No matter what theologians may argue with their array of nomen-

clature, the existence of the Heavenly Father cannot have better test than in the life of Jesus. So it was with the vow of Buddha Amida.

**THE LIFE OF GAUTAMA VIEWED IN THIS LIGHT.**

The life of Sakyamuni, approached in this light, is nothing less than the verification of Amida's vow. From the standpoint of Buddhists of Emphatic Nay, his earthly existence might well be seen as the example of a man of absolute freedom, attaining thereto by renouncing everything thought worthy in the eyes of the man of natural existence. Again, to the eye of Buddhists of Emphatic Yea, he was the hope and possibility of turning the natural man to Buddhahood in this life, by the work of purification and holiness. But to the Amidaists, Sakys's terrestrial life of seventy years was the mirror of Amida's vow. For he left his happy life in the court behind, not to enlighten himself, not to seek the way of salvation for himself, but to help all, the ignorant and the sinful not excepted. And he thought out everything, wrought out everything, down in the valley, up in the mountain, fasting, bleeding, tottering, for the love of man, and opened every possible way of salvation, numbering eighty thousand and four, for our sake. Coming down from the mountain among us after that, he spent the rest of his life in proclaiming his Gospel, amidst persecutions and calumnies. His life, in a word, was a life dedicated for the salvation of all human beings. But, then, you will see the vow of Buddha

Amida is, in essence, nothing more than the manifestation and assurance of this spirit of salvation, this all-embracing and thorough-going love of Sakya. So for one who well appreciates the message of Buddha Gautama, there is no obstacle in the way of taking Amida's vow to his heart as unfailing and indubitable. Sakyamuni's life stands as a living witness to it. Besides, Nagarjuna, the Augustine of Buddhism, had testified it; Vasubandha, the Bodhisattoa, had assured ~~it~~ of it; and in China, Donran, Doshaku and Zendo all had endorsed it, in the immortal work Sanzengi. And in our country, Genshin, whose simple devotion and singular piety surpassed those of the medieval Hermit, and whose work "On the Rebirth in the Pure Land" is compared ~~to~~ its sublimity of description of Paradise and Hell in Milton's "Paradise Lost," had recommended it. And then Honen, that compound of St. Francis and Luther in one person, was there sounding the praise of Buddha Amida from dawn till night in the sacred shelter of Yoshimizu in Kyoto. In the face of all these, Shinran wanted nothing for verification of the vow of Amida, and rested quite satisfied and happy in accepting what Honen taught him, as it was taught. "Concerning what is good and what is evil, there is nothing I can tell. Good and wise men told me to believe in the vow. I cannot do anything more, and I believe in it. That is all with me."

Thus understood, the mercy of Amitahba as

the centre, Buddhism of Redemption takes quite a different color from what was painted by Prof. Eucken and believed by most of the European scholars; for the emancipation is no more considered to consist in this teaching of a right insight of the individual, but in the divine mercy of Buddha Amida. And after emancipation, we do not pass into a state of entire unconsciousness, or reach the summit of a dreamless sleep, but go to a pure land divinely blissful and celestially happy. Such a state of bliss is, of course, taught to be realized only after death. Our life has its limit, its woe, its Karma, ordained by the law of cause and effect, and we human beings cannot absolutely be free from errors, both physical and moral, while in this life. Perfect happiness, *summum bonum*, is far from being attained in our life. But if you put your believing heart on the vow of Amida once and forever, the vision of the pure land will haunt you, celestial bliss promised and foreseen will stir you up from within, and, filled with joy and gratiture, you will be quite a different man from what you have been.

#### THANKSGIVING LIFE.

For in the true follower of St. Shinran, there is nothing to do but to offer thanks for the mercy of Buddha. *Sommum bonum* is promised for him in spite of his ignorance or his moral weakness, for which there is no cure within our reach. Only the brave deserves

the fair. But in this case, the worth of all worths is to fall to the lot of the undeserved, unclaimed and unexpectedly. "I have thought everything out, wrought every work out for you to take you up to the pure land, so you have nothing to do but to depend on me." Thus emancipated from ecclesiastical burdens of every description, one has no need to practice austerities, to hum sutras from morn to night, or to sit in retirement. But with the mind full of joy and gratitude, born of confidence of rebirth in the pure land, one can go on with his best, each in the line of his life work; the soldier as a soldier, the farmer as a farmer, the merchant as a merchant; even fishers and butchers as such, and in the long run, this joy and gratitude, working in itself, results in sweetness of temper, purity of motive and elevation of the character of the faithful. But knowing well the improvement thus going on within, they remain humble, and all the more thanksgiving, for he knows that his improvement is no merit of his, but of Buddha Amida's. Arrogance of any kind is thus unknown to him, and selfish egoism finds no shelter within him. Like a bride engaged to one to whom she knows she is undeserved, he beams all over with an irresistible sense of bliss and gratitude, and his manner is sweetly humble and gently timid. But what is the most striking in the lives of the followers of Buddha is the predominance of the passive form in their speech, instead of the active. For

instance, when they contribute ~~anything~~<sup>some</sup> to the public good, or to a work of charity, they are wont to express themselves in such a way as, "I was allowed to do that by the mercy of Buddha." The mercy of Buddha Amida stands first, second, and last—always. He is everything, and they are nothing but humble instruments for realizing his mercy to his fellow men.

#### THE CHARGE GROUNLESS.

Shinran's teaching has often been charged by Christians as the teaching of national prejudices and bigotted patriotism. As a matter of fact, his teaching holds national traditions in esteem, and does not run to contradict and upset them, as Christianity has often done. But the teaching of Amida's salvation is far from being national or racial in its essence. For racial prejudice or national pride has its root in the conviction of one's superiority over the other, a sort of arrogance. But feeling one's impotence to the core, as Shinran did, and living a life of thanksgiving, as he did, there can be no room in the hearts of his followers to invite any sort of arrogant prejudices. Discrimination is the offspring of the intellect that distinguishes the wise from the ignorant, the righteous from the bad. But in the religion of the heart, which considers everybody with loving kindness, and in which everybody lives with a spirit of mutual helpfulness born of gratitude, the world is a big

family, and we are all brethren, Buddha Amida being our universal parent. "All living beings are my children," said Buddha. "People in the West, people in the East, in the South and in the North, oh! they are all our brothers," St. Shinran responded.

#### FREE FROM SECTARIAN PREJUDICES.

Not only are Shinsuists free from racial or national prejudices, but they are also free from petty hatred of sectarianism. A spirit of toleration is universal and thoroughgoing among them, and persecutions, such as we see in the history of Christianity, are quite unknown. Humbly peaceful, and single-mindedly devoted to Buddha Amida, they have no time to meddle with others' affairs. "If the scholars of other sects hold our teaching of salvation in contempt, do not contradict them, but be reminded thereby of our impotence, and of Amida's mercy that pledges to take such impotent beings up to the pure land. To speak slightlying of any other doctrine is a crime, as the patricide, I tell you," was the warning of Shinran to his disciples. True, our founder did not go so far as to say with Jesus, "Resist him not that is evil, but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." But an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, is a morality quite strange to him. St. Shinran never pretended to be righteous, but ignorant and morally helpless. So it never occurred to his mind that he

was wise enough, good enough to condemn others in the name of philosophy and morality. In his conception he is nothing, less than nothing, and Amida's mercy is everything, more than everything; and abiding in it, he did not resist or contradict others. Before the sun of mercy, snow flakes of enmity are only to melt away, and peace and loving kindness reign in the land where Shinsuists live!

#### SHINRAN'S MARRIAGE.

When St. Shinran was thirty-one years old, he was married to a princess by the name of Tamahi, upon the insistent requests of his master, St. Honen, and of the daughter's father, Prince Kanezane, Minister of Japan. It is needless to say what revolution this brought about. The story is told that one day Kanezane came to Honen with a request. "I want to find amongst your disciples a husband for my daughter," he said. "I wish my daughter's husband to be a priest as well as a householder, to retain his sacred character whilst yet living the life of an ordinary layman and mixing with the world. I desire him, by means of a concrete example, to demonstrate that the religion of salvation by faith in Amida is one which concerns the layman as well as the monk. It will be for the good of the country if we can show that the family and not the monastery is the true focus of religion."

Honen accepted the proposition at once, and

the choice fell on Shinran. To marry is simple enough, but it was not so for a monk at that time, when celibacy was counted a most important ecclesiastical discipline—a belief that held its ground undisputed since the days of Sakyamuni, for more than two thousand years. And Shinran was most unwilling to undertake the responsibility of breaking down the barrier which kept the religion outside the family. But this request was repeated with great insistence by Kanezane and Genku, and at last, after more than a year of hesitation, Shinran gave consent to become the son-in-law of Kanezane, in the sole hope of proclaiming thereby salvation by faith in Amida. If a man be saved by faith only, and not by merit, not by works at all, he must let no man judge him in the matter of meats and drinks, of marriage or celibacy, because these things fall at once into insignificance when compared with the far greater principle at stake.

In a year or two he was the father of a lovely baby. And with its birth he was also the father of the new Buddhism. In the strict sense of the word, the Buddhistic home took its rise with his marriage for the first time, in its long course of development. And it is well to note that Sakyamuni left the home behind in order to bring a new ideal into it by the hand of St. Shinran.

## THE EXILE OF SHINRAN.

But it cost him much, for he was compelled to share the fate of his master, being banished to the distant cold north, as the monks of the older schools, whether at Hiezan or at Nara, lost no time to compass his ruin, alarmed much by the radical character of the changes advocated by Honen and Shinran, and jealous of their fame among the people of the time. Shinran made no protest, but with the gentle resignation habitual to him, he started for the land to which he was exiled. "But for the banishment of my master, I could not share his fate in exile; and if I did not wander in exile, I might have no chance to preach the gospel of salvation of Buddha Amida to the people of the remote countryside. So there is much to exult in banishment," he said afterwards.

Thus Shinran thrived upon persecution, and so did his new Buddhism. He achieved victory in defeat. If one can dwell with the mercy of Buddha, as Shinran did, he can go on through storm and sunshine with the same cheerfulness and gratitude; he can smile with happiness, whether in prosperity or in adversity, and his smile is contagious.

PROPAGATION OF THE NEW BUDDHISM IN  
THE NORTH.

Owing to the intercession of Kanezane's relative with the court, Shinran was recalled in 1211, together with his master, and was pardoned. But Genku was an old man of three

score and ten, and was worn out by the suffering of exile. He returned to Kyoto only to die the following year. And his older disciples, much scared by the ill feeling of the old school of Buddhism, whether at Kyoto or at Nara, and by the persecution therefrom, but no less shocked by Shinran's marriage, and his seeming contempt for the rules of discipline, determined not to take Shinran into their camp, and established a different sect, retaining the old ascetic discipline.

Shinran could not draw back, nor did he wish to do so. But as his dear master was no longer in Kyoto, nay, on earth, he was reluctant to go back to the seat of strife and luxury, power and ill-feeling. Having experienced the warm simplicity of the country folks for the first time, he felt more at home and in love with them than with those ostentatious civilians in the metropolis. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." So he went to Hitachi, in the far north, and established himself in a cottage in the village of Inada, and set himself to work on the doctrine of salvation by faith, and wrote out that famous work of six volumes, entitled "The Collection of Texts Concerning the Teachings and Practices, Faith and Salvation of the True Sect of the Pure Land."

This was a public announcement of his separation from his brethren of Jodo in the me-

tropolis. Traveling far and near thus prepared, we see him, now propagating the gospel of Amida's salvation by faith amidst the snow drifts of Nagano and Niigata, and then in Kamakura and Omi, where the fishermen, as of Galilee, stopped repairing their nets to listen to his sermons. The missionary spirit reigned supreme within him throughout his later life. Even the precipitous mountain paths of Hakone were no Alps for him; the River Ohi no Rubicon. And the width and length of his mission trips can only be compared with those of St. Kobo, and his contemporary, Nichiren, founder of a new sect bearing his name. So if there be any—and I know there are many—who impeach Buddhism as a religion of inactivity, and the Buddhism of Redemption as that of passive idleness, they have only to look into the life of St. Shinran to be enlightened of their error. Unselfish minds are always stronger and work harder than the selfish. The humblest, when inspired with divine mercy, often turns out to be superhuman—as a tender mother often does. And our St. Shinran remained always as a tender mother, superhuman in his activity of love and compassion.

#### HIS EPISTLES AND RELIGIOUS SONGS.

I will not enter into the details of his later life, or recite here the numerous stories of his compassion and love for the people, even for the evil-doers, interesting and instructive as the narratives may be. One thing that I can-

not help noting here, however, is his epistles in Japanese, which he addressed from time to time to his disciples. For more than two hundred years down to his time, Chinese had been in vogue as the language of scholars and literary men, just as Latin was in Europe in the middle ages. The native Japanese language was held in contempt among the aristocrats in the court, as a language only fit for the use of females or common folks. Thus learned men vied with each other in composing poems in Chinese. Essays, histories, classical commentaries, even the letters and what not, were all written out in Chinese. One of the reasons why Sugawara Michizane was looked up to as the man-god of literature, was his masterly skill in composing Chinese poetry. And St. Kukai was revered as Buddha-sent because he had been appointed to compose the inscription of the monument erected after the death of his master while he had been studying in China. To compose in Chinese with ease and fluency was a mark of distinction in itself at the time of St. Shinran. Once the brightest of all Tendai students in Hieizan, he, too, was well versed in Chinese, and could write his works in that language if he would. But he preferred the native tongue to the alien, and composed popular hymns in the language of common folks, and wrote epistles and letters in it. In doing so, we are not certain whether he had in view what Luther had when he translated the Bible into native German; but we are cer-

tain that he had one thing in mind above all things—that the language of religion must be the language of the heart, the language that could be directly spoken to the one's heart. Scientists' choice of language may fall on Esperanto, owing to its universal character; diplomats' on French, because of its refinement; but religionists must choose the native language, wherever they may go. Mother tongue is the only tongue that will ever be heard in the spiritual world. So our St. Shinran spoke and wrote in the tongue of the mothers of his day, which was simply tender and tenderly simple.

#### HE WAS AGAIN IN KYOTO.

After thirty-three years of untiring efforts in propagating the gospel of salvation in the North, we find him once again in Kyoto, residing first in one place and then in another. Disciples gathered around him more and more every day. But what struck St. Shinran to the core of his heart was the vicissitudes his native capital had undergone during his long absence. Political power went from one clan to another, and then to a third. That once powerful Fujiwara family had been stripped of their pomp by the onrush of the Taira family. But the Taira family, too, had been expelled from the city by the rise of the rival military family of Minamoto. And it was already many years since Yoritomo, representative of that family, and one of the most far-

sighted statesmen in our history, had been proclaimed shogun or governor-general of the country. The Minamoto was the representative family of the North, as the Taira was of the South, so Yoritomo raised a new castle and castle town in Kamakura and made it the center of the new administration instead of Kyoto. Thus abandoned, Kyoto, the center of the South, had to share the same fate of that sacred city on the Tiber when Constantine moved his capital to the east. And everything in and around Kyoto was a sad illustration of the Buddhists' text that tells of the transitoriness of the glory of this world. A thing of beauty is no joy forever; it so often decreases into nothingness. And that imperial city of Kyoto was no more the center of power and pleasure. The Emperor yet remained in the old palace, but he was merely a puppet in the hands of the Shogun. The court life which had once been the center of intellectual and artistic activity, of social enjoyment and refined voluptuaries, was now a memory of the past. The gloom of a sepulchre took possession of the whole city, and the curse of devastation was seen everywhere.

"Church knell sounds in the dusk only to die out in the dark; cherry blossom flowers in the morning, but to fade in the day," the text says. Shinran was sad. His master who had ever been dear to him was no more. Some of his old acquaintances yet remained in Kyoto, but they were rather enemies than friends;

they hated his radical faith. In his youth he was an orphan; in his prime an exile and wanderer, and now at the advanced age of four score and five, he stood friendless in the deserted pomp of his nativity. "Condemned as we are to the torture of eternal hell, we will have no chance of freeing ourselves from the world sorrow unless the merciful Buddha be there to make the vow to save us in compassion and prepare the way to lead us up to the pure land. It seems to me there is nothing certain in this evanescent world, but the vow of Amida, so we have to rely on him, and we have only to rely on him as his mercy is boundless," he once said to his disciples. For him everything in the world was nothing or often worse than nothing, and the love of Amida was everything—was more than everything. In denouncing the natural man of natural existence, he was often more emphatic than the Buddhist of Emphatic Nay. But in proclaiming the salvation of Buddha Amida, he was overwhelmed with gratitude and beamed with joy; he was far more emphatic in assuring the regeneration of the natural man into the spiritual man in the spiritual land. Thoroughgoing pessimism combined with no less thoroughgoing optimism, sounded spiritual melodies yet unheard of in religious history. To participate in the enjoyment of these tender melodies, people of the capital flocked to him as of one accord, and we find him, the friendless visitor to his own nativity,

soon surrounded by numerous adherents who called him their master and savior, and he was happy for their sake.

**“I HAVE NO DISCIPLES.”**

But Shinran told them that he had no disciples of his own. “I may well call one my disciple,” he said, if what I have been talking was of my mind, my own thoughts. But to call those my disciples who were prompted by the mercy of Buddha Amida to seek salvation, is more than offensive. In this life of ours, men come to us now and go from us then; that is inevitable. But to condemn those who went from us, as ungrateful, unworthy to be born in the pure land, is to substitute one’s own merit for Buddha’s mercy. My faith is given by Buddha Amida, and so is theirs. So it is quite deplorable to pretend and act as if the faith was given out from me, and not from Buddha himself.” So he called his followers brethren, or fellow travellers, and never once disciples.

**CONVICTION OF THE REBIRTH ON THE EARTH.**

On November 28, 1262, he breathed his last, at the age of ninety, amidst the gentle grief of his pious brethren, and went up to the land of Buddha Amida to be one with Him and in His happiness.

But did he intend to remain once for all in the pure land to participate of its ineffable joy and happiness? The thought is too selfish to

have a shelter in his mind. Buddha Amida incarnated himself as Hozo, out of boundless compassion for suffering humanity, and made the vow to take up all living beings to the last man to that pure land. The example must be followed by every faithful believer; inactivity and selfish contentment is the forbidden fruit in the Kingdom of Buddha Amida. So in his dying hour, he tried to console his followers by promising them to return again among them and join with them in praise of our merciful Buddha.

“Though I depart for the pure land of bliss and joy, as my time in this life is up now, I will anon be among you, as the breaker on the beach ebbs only to flow again. So you may think when one of you gives thanks to Buddha Amida, you are not one alone but two, and when two of you do that, you are not two but three; for Shinran will always be there with you.” And in this thought you will remember Jesus’ words of consolation to His disciples at the last supper, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

To go up to the pure land is not for entertainment; if for entertainment, what Guyau said about selfish Christians may equally be applied in accusing this sect of Buddhists. “Permit me to relate a dream,” he said. “One night—had some angel or seraph taken me on his wings to transport me to the paradise of the Gospels, near the Creator?—one night I felt

soaring in heaven, far above the earth. As I rose higher and higher, I heard a sad and weary sound ascending from the earth, a sound similar to the monotonous song of the torrents heard amid the solitude and silence of the mountain summits. I distinguished human voices—sobs mingled with thanksgiving; groans, interrupted by benedictions; I heard despairing supplications, the sighs of the dying, rising with the fumes of incense. All this melted into one intense groan—into a symphony so heart-rending that my soul filled with pity. The sky seemed obscured by it, and I no longer saw the sun, nor the joy of the earth. I turned round to him who was with me. ‘Do you not hear?’ I asked him. The angel looked at me with a serene and peaceful look. ‘These are,’ he said, ‘the prayers of men, ascending from the earth to God.’ While he spoke, his white wing glittered in the sun; it seemed to me quite black and full of horror. ‘What tears I should shed were I that God!’ he exclaimed; and I began, indeed, to cry like a child. I loosened the hand of the angel, and let myself fall down again to the earth, thinking there remained in me too much humanity to make it possible for me to live in Heaven.”

Our world is too full of woe and suffering to allow any compassionate soul to remain in the seat of festivities in Paradise, thinking only of his own pleasure. As the tide ebbs only to flow again, we must come down to the earth to

share the work of Buddha Amida in taking all human creatures up to the pure land, and should know no rest until the last is saved. Elsewhere Shinran said to his beloved follower Yuienbo : "I have never invoked the name of Buddha, even for once, with a hope of making the post existence of my parents a whit happier. All living beings seem to me my parents and bretheren alike. So being born anew as Buddha in the next life, I want to save them all, not one excepted. In this life of mine, I don't think any good will come out of it; so impotent and depraved am I that there is nothing in me to induce Buddha to have him improve the lot of my parents in the other world. (So my only care is to surrender myself and to be taken, by Buddha's mercy, up to the pure land to be one of my parents in the other world.) My only care in this life is to surrender myself and to be taken, by Buddha's mercy, up to the pure land to be one with him there as soon as possible. But no sooner am I one with Buddha than I will come down again to the earth and will think every thought out, and work every work out with the sole end of bringing all living creatures who suffer the work of Karma in its multitudinous form of retribution, to the mercy of our Buddha." To go up to Heaven is to be one with Buddha, and to be one with Buddha is to be perfected like him, only to come down again to the earth to share the work of salvation of Buddha Amida to the end. "Buddha comes eight thousand times to

the earth," the text says. In his toil, as in his mercy, there is no end, no limit. And so with our St. Shinran.

His earthly remains were interred on the western slope of the East Hill, in the district of Ohtani, where now stands a sacred building, the goal of the pilgrimage of 15,000,000 followers in our country.

#### SUMMARY.

Such was the life and teaching of St. Shinran, the founder of the true sect of the pure land in our country. Regarded from the length of earthly life, his was the greatest of the saints, covering almost a century of years. And that century was one of the most eventful in the annals of our national development. His life was a miniature of the epoch in every detail, and no life was more remarkable in its earthly experience of the world's sorrows, in its aspiration to be one with the highest, in its darkness of utter disappointment, in its keenness of self-accusation, and in the culminating sense of human impotence and helplessness. As a necessary outcome of all these, his attitude to and conception of life and the world was immersed deep in pessimism of the blackest sort; and in deplored the dominance of bad Karma, or passion and temptation, he was quite as emphatic as the Buddhists of Emphatic Nay, or even more so. For the Buddhists of this sect, as I said elsewhere, recognize the merit of individual insight and the

virtue of ascetic practices; and their picture of Nirvana, colored as it is with the ghastly pale of hollowness, still has some hold on the mind in its serene aloofness from the pangs of the world.

But Shinran's self-accusation went so far as to openly confess his own insufficiency of attaining this individual insight, and his impotence to strictly observe these ascetical practices. Passion dominates over reason in our life, and pain over pleasure in our world. Natural existence of natural man is good for nothing and evil for everything. Even the Nirvana of pale descriptions is not in store for him, but the inevitable damnation and accompanying torture of hell, is all he should expect. So we may call his the Buddhism of Absolute Nay in contrast to that of Emphatic Nay.

But Shinran was another man after he met St. Honen. He recognized in the vow of Buddha Amida as verified in the life of Buddha Gautama and other famous priests in India, China, and Japan, the redemptive mercy of Buddha, who embraces all in compassion for their helplessness, and thought every thought and wrought every work to save us, to take us up to the pure land of bliss and joy; and this with no merit of insight and rigorous practices on our part, but by our faith only. And this faith, too, is not the work of us, according to him, but a revelation of Buddha's mercy in our mind. Buddha Amida is everything,

as we are nothing. Henceforward, he doubted nothing, feared nothing, entered into conjugal relation with the daughter of the minister, as he was well convinced that mercy should be extended to the layman as well as to priests. He braved persecution with the sweet temper of cheerfulness, for he found in it the chance to carry the Gospel of Buddha Amida to the country folks in the north. He remained in the country after the pardon, as he thought the special favor of Buddha is on those who are ignorant but simple-hearted. He never entered into dispute and controversy with others, for such discussions are liable to beget arrogance and anger. With gentle humility of mind he called himself the Ignorant, simply devoted to the exultation of Amida's vow, taking all his followers as brethren or fellow travelers, but not as his own disciples. He might have been tempted at times, for he confessed many times that he committed sin. But he thought of Amida's mercy, which was specially generous to those who are weak and sinful, and gave thanks for it all the more. The sense of human impotence is in ratio to the depth of the omnipotence of Amida's vow. Thus to him who depends on and is devoted to the mercy of Buddha, black pessimism is upset by its roots, and everything in our life and the world looks blissful in the beam of celestial light. So this teaching of St. Shinran is, in a way, more optimistic than that of Emphatic Yea. For the Buddhism of Emphatic

Yea, though it emphasizes the capability of all beings to be one with Buddha, yet demands purification and sanctification on one's part as the necessary condition of achieving the end. If one is holy and pure in thought, word, and act, he will be one with Buddha, is the essence of their teaching. So the Buddha of this kind is, in many instances, a subjunctive Buddha, and this kind of optimism is often, in reality, conditional optimism. But in the salvation of Buddha Amida, there is no if, no conditional. One has only to put his faith on the all-embracing and omnipotent love and mercy of Buddha to be allowed to the heavenly state of bliss and light. So we may call the teaching of Shinran, the teaching of Absolute Yea in order to make a distinction thereby from that of Emphatic Yea.

Absolute Nay, thus combined with Absolute Yea, constitutes the essence of the Buddhism of Redemption. And this combination begets an overwhelming sense of joyous gratitude, as we pointed out elsewhere. And the morality of the Buddhism of this sect is founded in this sense of gratitude, for in the psychology of Shinshu believers, there is nothing to do in this life; Buddha has done everything for his *summum bonum*. How to give thanks for this immense beneficence, therefore, is the only question the Shinshuist must settle. You have only to praise the Buddha and give thanks for his mercy, till the end of your life; and if your soul is permeated through and

through by the sense of thanksgiving, you will be a kind father and obedient son; as a neighbor, you will be reliable; as a citizen, law-abiding. Everything good will come from this inexhaustible fountain of gratitude and thanksgiving. But being one with Buddha in the pure land after his death, every faithful one should not, cannot rest contented with the promised ease and happiness of Heaven. The boundless mercy of Buddha is at the same time the whole-souled willingness to serve mankind, to suffer for the sake of humanity.

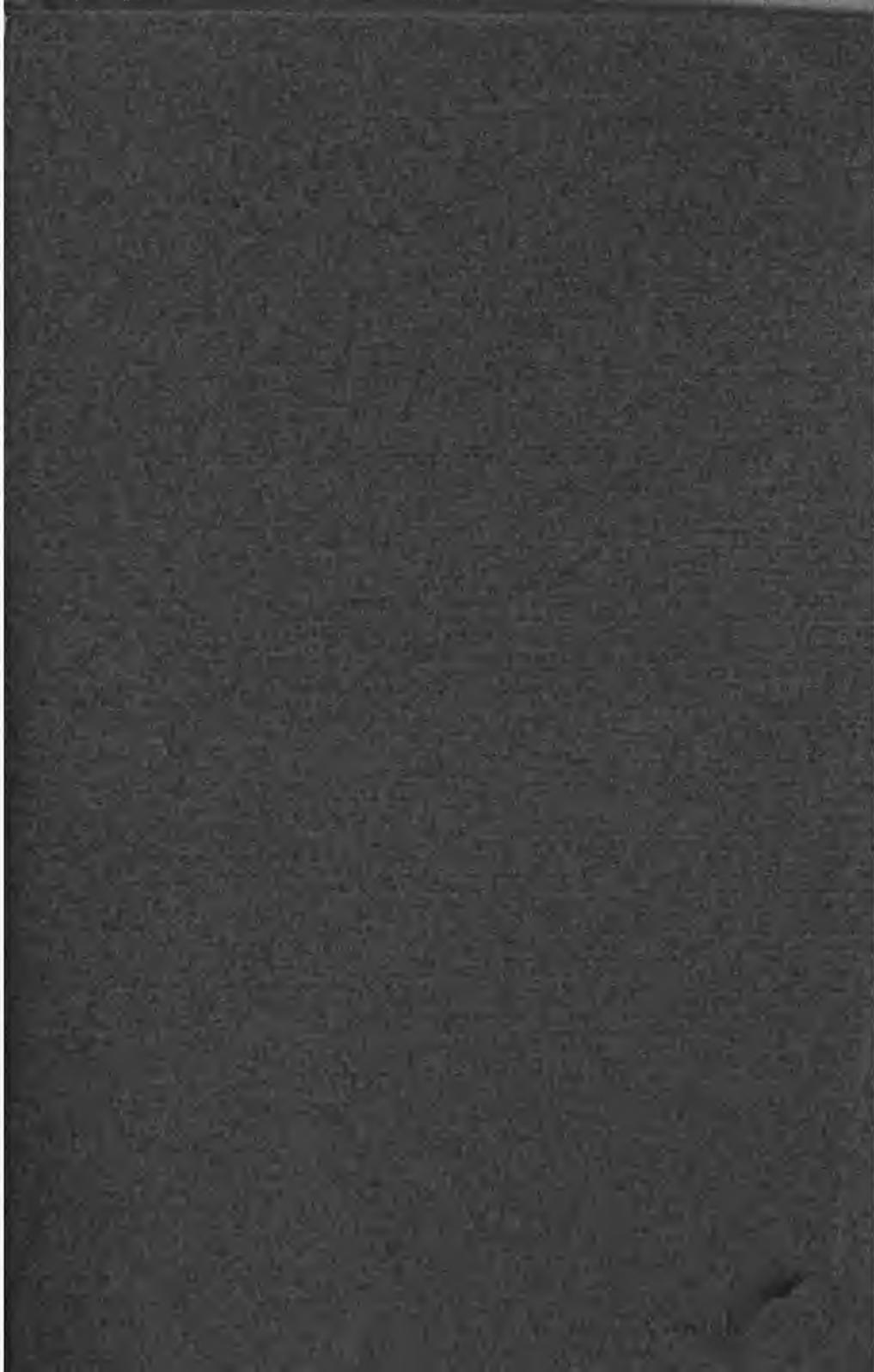
So the Essence of the Buddhism of Redemption may be summarized into four points:

1. To know thyself as thou art; it is worse than nothing.
2. Put absolute faith on the vow of Buddha Amida; it is everything, and more.
3. Make joyous gratitude thy sole motive of conduct in life.
4. After being one with Buddha in the pure land, thou shalt be among us again to devote thy life in the work of Buddha to the end of the world.

But, then, all these are implied in a sentence Shinshuists recall every day and night, "Namu ~~Amida~~ Butsu." Literally, Namu is the Sanskrit equivalent to the English "to devote" or "to put faith"; Amida, or Amita or Amiatabha, means "eternal or boundless light"; and Butsu or Budha, "love and mercy." So

in a sense it means, "We devote or offer our lives to the love and mercy eternal and boundless." Simple as it is, it implies everything good for us. And Buddhists of Redemption live their lives as Shinran did, repeating the word "Namam<sup>u</sup>dabutsu" every day, from morning till night, until the end of their lives.

(The End.)









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